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Czech Republic

Biotechnology

Status of GM Approvals

2003

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Report Highlights: The Czech Republic has approved a variety of field tests for genetically modified (GM) crops. Roundup Ready soybeans may also be used as a food ingredient. However, labeling requirements and anti-biotech non-governmental groups have largely kept GM-ingredients out of consumer foods.

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Vienna [AU1], EZ

Status of GMO approvals

As of February 2003, the Czech Republic has approved the following GM varieties:

- RR soya for release on the market (for import)
- RR soya to be used in foodstuffs
- RR soya to be used in feeds
- Bt corn for release into the environment (field trials)
- RR corn for release into the environment (field trials)

All varieties were approved based on request by Monsanto Czech Republic. No variety was turned down although an application for GM wheat was returned (the application requires a detection method and Monsanto is expected to resubmit the application).

The above mentioned varieties have to be labeled if they are present at a level of above one percent in consumer food products.

Monsanto has a field for testing their Bt corn in Branisovice near Brno. Last year Greenpeace held a demonstration and damaged the field. The police broke up the demonstration. This year Monsanto will continue with field trials for Bt and RR corn (the varieties have to be tested for three years before they can be approved and grown in the Czech Republic).

Monsanto has applied for registration of Bt corn for release on the market (for import). The Ministry of Environment is collecting comments from other groups involved in the approval process including the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Health. Greenpeace, an official partner in the administrative procedure approving new GM products, is refusing to communicate with the Commission on approvals and has said that they will only deal with the Minister of Environment. Monsanto expects to hear from Ministry of Environment by the end of this month and indications are that Monsanto's application will be approved. However, Greenpeace can (and most probably will) appeal to a special commission ("rozkladovací komise") at the Ministry of Environment. The problem is that there are no deadlines for dealing with this appeal and the process could drag out indefinitely.

There is a draft of an amendment to the GMO law, which removes civic associations (such as Greenpeace) from the administrative procedure. The draft is now at the legislative section of the government and will likely be passed soon by the Parliament.

Despite field testing and the approval of GM-soybeans in food products, the use of GM-ingredients is still hampered by required labeling of consumer products. There is a real fear in the retail food sector that labeled foods will cause non-governmental groups to single them out for protests. Thus, to our knowledge, there are no GM-labeled food products in stores in the Czech Republic.

For more information on the Czech GMO labeling and the approval processes, please see GAIN reports EZ1011 and EZ1016.